

J. Cole Explains What Inspired His 'Fire Squad' Verse About Eminem, Iggy Azalea And Macklemore

He explains that it's rooted in capitalism.

By Adam Fleischer

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When [J. Cole](#)'s new album, *2014 Forest Hills Drive*, leaked last week, one of the songs that immediately had people talking was "Fire Squad." On it, [he had a lyric that name-checked](#) Eminem, Justin Timberlake, Iggy Azalea and Macklemore, and posited that "white people have snatched the sound" of hip-hop.

During an interview with Angie Martinez on Power 105, Cole explained the inspiration behind the lyric – saying it's rooted in capitalism – and clarified that it wasn't a diss, but an observation.

He kicked off the sit-down by explaining how he feels capitalism is the root of many of the issues facing our society – "that's not a system that does it anymore, because it's selfish, and nobody cares about nobody," he said – before connecting the principles championed by that system to his "Fire Squad" verse and the shifting look and sound of hip-hop.

"It's silly how big of an Eminem fan I am," he began, clarifying his intent. "There's a very select group of top notch people that I worship; Eminem was literally at the top of that list. My first song [sounds] like an Eminem bite. If you think I'm dissing Eminem, I know you just read the headline and you're not listening to the song."

"That has nothing to do with dissing Eminem or dissing any of those people. That part of the verse is an observation, me making an observation of culture right now, what's happening."

Part of that observation was triggered by a recent trip to the iTunes Jazz page, where he was doing some browsing.

"I went to the iTunes Jazz page and I was like, 'Oh!' It hit me," he said. "The entire page of iTunes Jazz is 99.7% white people."

"It's fine; anybody could do whatever music they want, it's art," he added. "Jazz is a black form of music in its origins. And not only is it a black form of music, it was the hip-hop of its day. It was that much of a rebellious music."

The connection became even more clear. "It hit me: This is the point in time where you see that switch in hip-hop."

"It's not Iggy Azalea's fault. It's not Eminem's fault. And I don't want to put Eminem in a category with anybody in terms of skill level. What I'm saying is, there comes a time when the system realizes that, I can sell this white person a lot easier – it's no conscious person."

So where does he think that the music is headed?

"I fast forward 20, 30 years from now, and I see hip-hop being completely white."

Cole's *2014 Forest Hills Drive* is available now, and you can stream "Fire Squad" below.